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PROBLEMS IN COOPERATIVE EXTENSION EDUCATION

Study for Extension Education 7-695

1. By Don K. Wiles, National 4-H Fellow.
2. Under the direction of E. W. Aiton
3. From September 1954 to January 1955
4. Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to learn why the Agricultural Extension Service is working with young men and women, how the States are working with young men and women through group activities, how well the program is accepted, and some of its general problems.

5. Background

For some time I have worked with young men and women, and as a county agent I have often wondered, "Why is the agricultural Extension Service working with young men and women". I have also wondered how other States and other areas are working with the young men and women through group activities, how well the work is accepted, and what some of the common problems were.

6. Problems To Be Investigated And Design Of Study

The study was conducted in an informal manner. All States that reported one or more Extension-sponsored young men and women's groups were queried. The 1953 Federal Extension Service summary of the State annual reports was referred to for the suggested mailing list.

The States were asked for three things, which were:

- (1) Handbooks, materials, and guides concerning the organization of such a group or groups in the State.
- (2) Names of two or three counties in the State that have a successful group of young men and women or young married couples.
- (3) Comments from the State staff on the general success of the program, and comments on how the program might be improved.

The annual reports of the suggested counties and of the State offices were read; all material and replies that were received were read; conferences were held with Federal Extension Staff members and others; and all leads that were obtained were followed through. The information obtained was summarized and can be found on the following pages.



A sample of the letter which was mailed to the State offices can be found on the last page.

## 7. Significance of Study

The study may have limited value to other people, but to me it had a great value. Through the study I have had the following questions answered:

- (1) Why is the Agricultural Extension Service working with young men and women?
- (2) How well is the work with young men and women accepted?
- (3) How are the States serving their young men and women through group activities? (I have obtained some ideas and suggestions that will be of help to me.)
- (4) What are some of the problems in working with young men and women? (From this question I have received some background for a thesis that I am now working on. The thesis, it is hoped, will be of some aid to workers with young men and women.)

By having the four questions answered as much as possible I feel that I have a better understanding of the young men and women's program. By having a better understanding of the program I am hoping that I will be able to do a better job of working with young men and women.

### WHY IS THE AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE WORKING WITH YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN ?

Basic reasons for having a program for young men and women can be found in the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, which was amended in 1954. The act says that the agricultural extension work is "to aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture and home economics, and to encourage the application of the same."

The same law states that the "Cooperative agricultural extension work shall consist of the giving of instruction and practical demonstrations in agriculture and home economics and subjects relating thereto to persons not attending or resident in said colleges in the several communities, and imparting information on said subjects through demonstrations, publications, and otherwise and for the necessary printing and distribution of information in connection with the foregoing."

Since the enactment of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, extension workers have been working with people of all ages and all walks of life. As early as the late 1920's some extension workers began working with young men and women as a method of teaching agriculture and home economics and related subjects.

One of the first counties in the Nation to service such a group was Pender County in North Carolina. The first organization in that county was known as the Pender County 4-H Service Club. It had a charter membership of 16. Only outstanding club members who had completed 2 years of club work, and local leaders, could join. The purpose of the club was to develop leaders out of the older 4-H Club members and to encourage boys and girls who had already finished club work to enter college. The club met twice a year in September and December.

Other extension workers began to take an active interest in young men and women. In 1935 the Extension Subcommittee for Young Men and Women was formed for the purpose of aiding in determining policy recommendations. And in September 1948, the Joint Committee on Extension Programs, policies, and Goals of the U. S. Department of Agriculture and Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities emphasized the importance of the work with young men and women by issuing the following statement:

"A very significant development of recent years is the organized extension program for older youth or young adults. This program is directed to young men and women whose interest and needs have matured beyond the types of programs usually associated with 4-H Club work, but who have not yet been effectively absorbed into adult extension work. This is a strategically important group in rural society deserving the same proportionate time and effort on the part of extension as 4-H Club members and adults. The forward-looking programs for this age group now being conducted in a few States need to be developed further and similar programs organized in the other States.

"These young people are just getting started in life; they are choosing mates, determining occupations, and building homes. They are making decisions of lifetime significance. Unfortunately, extension experience in conducting organized educational programs for this group is rather limited, and relatively few tested principles have been developed. More intensive work needs to be done toward defining an effective organization and the area of most progressive program activities, and toward effecting an energetic harnessing of the talents of this group."

Since September 1948, several national policy-making conferences have stressed the need to work with young men and women. Some of the more recent conferences have pointed out the value and importance of working with young men and women through other organizations as well as through Extension-sponsored programs.

#### HOW WELL IS THE WORK WITH YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN ACCEPTED?

Generally speaking, the need to work with young men and women is recognized by all extension workers, but not all workers put the same degree of emphasis upon the program.



In 1953 the Extension Service's young men and women's program reached a total of 371,406 young adults. This includes 204,977 young men and 166,409 young women and does not allow for duplications of those who may have been reached in more than one group. Of these young adults, 24,716 were reached through 1,106 Extension-sponsored community groups, and 43,814 were reached through 1,005 Extension-sponsored countywide groups.

In some instances young men and women were reached through organizations that were sponsored jointly by an organization and the Extension Service. Through such programs, 12,644 young men and women were reached in community groups, and 13,642 young men and women in countywide groups.

Extension workers reached another 192,073 young men and women through groups that were not sponsored in anyway by the Extension Service.

In 1953 all but three States indicated in their annual reports that they had at least one or more Extension-sponsored young men and women groups. Of the 45 States 12 had 10 or less. As a general rule these 12 States did not have a statewide program for the young men and women. Rather it was a case of special interest by a county or district extension worker.

Many of the States have assigned one or more persons to work with the young men and women's program. Some of these workers are expected to spend part of their time with the young men and women's program and part of their time with other extension activities. In other States they are expected to devote most or all of their time to working with young men and women.

#### HOW ARE THE STATES SERVING THEIR YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN THROUGH GROUP ACTIVITIES?

To date there has been very little disagreement about the idea that the Agricultural Extension Service needs to work with young men and women. But there has been some disagreement about how the Service should work with young adults and the importance of the problem in relation to other groups.

The Extension Service is at present working with young men and women. Besides, through the use of individual contacts young adults are being served by Extension-sponsored groups, through programs that are sponsored jointly by the Extension Service and some other organizations, and by organizations that are not sponsored in anyway by the Extension Service but through which the Service helps upon request. All of these programs were found to have been started and maintained for the purpose of developing the young men and the young women.

Of the 45 States that reported having one or more Extension-sponsored groups of young men and women in 1953, 33 replied to the questionnaire.



No attempt was made to learn about the groups sponsored jointly by the Extension Service and some other organization or about groups sponsored solely by other organizations. Thus, the rest of this part of the report will pertain to Extension-sponsored groups only.

For clarity the matter of organization will be discussed under two separate heads: (1) Types of organization and (2) means of motivating participation.

### TYPES OF ORGANIZATION

There seem to be many types of Extension-sponsored programs for young men and women. There are special-interest and general-interest groups, and there are coeducational and noncoeducational groups. This division appears to break down as follows:

Noncoeducation special-interest groups: Separate groups, to study one specific problem, were started for young men and for young women.

For example, several States indicated that one or more counties had home extension clubs for young homemakers. The purpose of this approach was to study problems in home economics of special interest to a young homemaker.

A noncoeducational special-interest group for young men can be found in Oregon. This State reported that Young Farmers' clubs were going forward in nine counties. These are groups of young farmers from 18 to 35 years of age, who are owner operators, renters, or partners with their parents. The purpose of the clubs is to discuss common problems.

Coeducational special-interest groups: These are groups having both young men and young women and set up for a specific purpose. The purpose may either be to promote some activity or to develop the young men and women by the pursuit of some specific activity. Most common of these types of programs are the 4-H Alumni Clubs, 4-H Honorary Clubs, and 4-H Service Clubs. Their purpose seemed to be to develop the young men and women and to promote the 4-H Club program.

Members of such clubs are very often selected. This means that not every young man or woman in the area can join. For example, in the case of a 4-H Alumni Club only those who have been a 4-H member can join.

Coeducational general-interest groups: These groups seemed to be the most common and the most popular. Both young men and young women can join. This type of program is set up for the single purpose of developing the young adults in as many different ways, methods, and subjects as found necessary or desirable.

In a few States this group is further divided into a program for single men and women and for young married couples. Colorado is an example.

Noncoeducational general interest groups: In no case could such a group be found.

### MEANS OF MOTIVATING PARTICIPATION

All the coeducational general-interest groups seemed to be motivating group participation by the use of (1) recreation, (2) education, (3) community service, and (4) leadership. In the other types of programs the stress was more on education and leadership opportunities, and less on community service and recreation. The four ways of motivating participation were used at meetings, sponsored activities, camps, invitational parties, State-sponsored activities, and contests. These means are not necessarily used at the same time, but the more aggressive programs seemed to stress the use of all four practices throughout the year.

Some State programs were more competitive than others. That is to say that they try to stimulate participation through the use of contests and awards. For example, Illinois and Iowa have a talent-find contest, a public speaking contest, a parliamentary procedures contest, a community service award program, a leadership award program, a tractor rodeo, an automobile rodeo, and several other events. These contests were on a county, district, and State level, and a few were interstate.

Approximately 20 of the 33 States that replied had prepared some material about their plans of organization for the young men and women's program. Most of the material was very good and of credit to the State. As for the type of material used in the four phases of motivation (recreation, education, leadership opportunities, and community service), no request was made. Some material was received along with the requested information.

Highlights of what was found in the materials and the letters are as follows:

Recreation. The material received from Nebraska and South Dakota included some excellent bulletins pertaining to this field. The bulletins gave suggestions of types of recreation and points on how to plan recreational programs, and one bulletin gave a guide on the evaluation of a party. Almost all of the 20 States had lists of suggestions.

Education. Almost all of the 20 States had prepared lists of suggestions giving sources of education. Some had leaflets for encouraging group discussion. New York had a series of six topics for discussion, attractively prepared. These leaflets are short, clear, and to the point. In my opinion they would do much to stimulate group discussions.

An educational playlet from Illinois dealt with the development of a father-son farm business agreement. No indication was given as to the success of the playlet.

Leadership. A unique experiment was tried in 1938 in Minnesota in the field of leadership and education. The program is still in practice and appears to be quite successful.



The State divided its young men and women groups into districts, each consisting of about eight groups. Each group selected four members to attend a district leader-training session. Here the members were trained in a pre-selected topic and in ways of presenting it. The young adults then returned to their counties and presented the subject matter to their local group.

Community Service. Most of the 20 States had a list of suggested community services. None of the lists told how to carry through on the suggestions. The only material received that gave suggestions on how to carry on a community service activity was a leaflet from Illinois, about a program in highway safety. Undoubtedly, many other such leaflets are being used.

#### WHAT PROBLEMS ARE ENCOUNTERED IN WORKING WITH YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN?

The question was asked of State extension workers only. Thus, the problems listed below do not reflect the feelings of all extension workers. Rather, they reflect the feelings of the State administrators of the young men and women's program. The three most commonly mentioned problems were:

- (1) A disagreement of opinion on whether the young adults should have an organization of their own or be encouraged to take part in existing programs (4-H and adult).

Note: Some of the States expressed a desire to have a more definite young men and women's program. But owing to a lack of personnel and money they had decided it was best to integrate with present programs.

- (2) Lack of personnel and money.
- (3) Lack of interest on the part of both State and local extension personnel. It was often pointed out that the success of such programs depended upon the local agent's interest.

Problems of the program less frequently mentioned were:

- (1) Lack of trained agents. It was pointed out that desire without ability makes for a weak program.
- (2) Lack of leadership. This meant a lack of leadership by people in the county other than the local extension workers.
- (3) Lack of proper material for the young men and women's program.
- (4) Lack of a good reporting system between local groups, county extension staffs, and State staffs about the young men and women's activities.
- (5) Lack of sound program planning.

(6) Lack of community service projects.

(7) Lack of harmony between county extension staff members.

(One State mentioned that harmony was needed more between county agents, home agents, and club agents before a strong young men and women's program could be developed.)

It might be interesting to those reading this report to know that one State had just dropped its young men and women's program. The State gave the following reasons:

(1) Lack of staff and money.

(2) Lack of interest in the program on the part of the majority of the county extension staff members.

(3) A decision to take what they had and to try to do a better job of reaching older youth of 4-H age.

#### WRITER'S COMMENTS

In closing this study I should like to state that I am even more convinced than before of the importance of working with young men and women. There is probably no one best method of working with young adults, and it is through a combination of ways that one will best be able to help the young man and young woman to develop. There is a great challenge and opportunity in working with young men and women.

#### HERE IS SOMETHING FOR EXTENSION WORKERS TO THINK ABOUT AND TO DISCUSS

In 1953 the Nation's county extension workers reported that they spent 1.3 percent of their time with young men and women and 37.1 percent of their time with 4-H Club work. (The remaining time was spent with adults.) During this time these extension workers reached 371,406 young men and women and 2,058,144 boys and girls. These figures indicate that in 1953 the average county extension worker was spending 29 days with the 4-H Club program to every 1 day with young men and women. Yet, this average worker reached only 5.5 4-H Club members to every 1 young man or woman.

According to the same report, the average meeting attendance of adults, young men and women, and 4-H members and leaders was as follows:

	<u>Adults</u>	<u>YMW</u>	<u>4-H</u>
Leader-training meetings for leaders ....	21.28	20.17	26.00
All other meetings agent held or participated in.....	39.16	35.50	47.62
Meetings held or conducted by volunteer leaders.....	17.71	26.22	15.29
All meetings held by agents and local leaders.....	20.85	31.13	28.48



These figures are not meant to indicate which program is the best. Rather the figures are meant to point out that a county extension worker can get just as good a result in time spent with young men and women as he can with boys and girls and with adults. (This is speaking in terms of contacts made per unit of time spent.) Whether or not the time spent and contacts made with young men and women are wisely used depends upon the individual county and community programs.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FEDERAL EXTENSION SERVICE  
Washington 25, D. C.

October 18, 1954

Dear

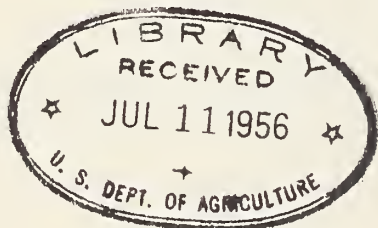
During the regular school year of 1954-55 I will be working in cooperation with the USDA Federal Extension Service under the direction of Miss Mary L. Collings, Chief, Personnel Training Branch, Division of Extension Research and Training; and Mr. E. W. Aiton, Director, Division of 4-H and YMW Programs. My course of study is planned as a part of the National 4-H Fellowship program; I am one of the six recipients.

One of the requirements of the fellowship is that each Fellow study some problem relating to the Agricultural Extension Service activities. The area which I have selected to study is the field of YMW and YMC Extension sponsored programs in your State. For this reason, I would appreciate it if you would send me the following:

- (1) Handbooks, materials, and guides as to the organization of such a group or groups in your State.
- (2) Names of two or three counties in your State which have a successful YMW and/or YMC group. (I would like to read one or two of the agents' past annual reports to learn more about the organization on a county level. The reports are available for reference here at the USDA if you would tell me which ones to read.)
- (3) Comments from you as to the general success of the program in your State, and comments as to how you think the program could be improved.

A summary of this study will be mailed to you if you so desire. I would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,



Don K. Wiles  
National 4-H Fellow  
Division of Extension Research and Training



